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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9977
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CZECH REPUBLIC: SPECIAL 301 OUT-OF-CYCLE REVIEW
DEMARCHE DELIVERED

REF: STATE 1988

¶1. (SBU) The Ambassador contacted Deputy Prime Minister Vondra by phone January 22 to inform the USG decision to place the Czech Republic on the Special 301 Watch List. Vondra was aware of the issue and did not seem surprised by the news, although it was clear he was not seized with the issue, which all government ministers regard as Minister of Industry and Trade Martin Riman's problem to fix. We got the same impression from the MFA Political Director (Under Secretary-equivalent) Martin Povejsil when we informed him in

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person January 21.

¶2. (SBU) MIT Director General of the EU Department Ladislava Votavova, who heads the Czech inter-ministerial committee on IPR issues, received the news January 22 and said that elevation to the Watch List is an appropriate response and one step in the process toward a "better result." She hopes the OCR decision will motivate her government to give more attention to IPR issues, and urged the Embassy to continue to engage Deputy Minister Martin Tlapa and Minister Martin Riman. Votavova informed that she would be leaving her position at the end of January; Her successor has not yet been named.

3 . (SBU) COMMENT: Nobody was surprised about the Watch List designation, and our working-level contacts are hopeful that the designation will help capture higher-level attention to the problem. Votavova told us privately that she was criticized for inviting the Embassy and industry to attend the committee meetings. Therefore, the future relationship between the Embassy and the inter-ministerial IPR committee will depend largely on Votavova's unnamed successor. Votavova has been our greatest ally within the Czech government on the IPR issue and her departure is a definite loss. However, the real challenge in moving the IPR issue forward is to get the Czech government's attention at the political level. Post will use the Watch List designation, the April Special 301 review, and the Czech EU Presidency in 2009 to press MIT leadership to move beyond their current coordination role and take ownership of the fight against piracy at the border markets. We will also continue to engage other ministries to holding the MIT leadership accountable for concrete action. END COMMENT.
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